Dorcas Honorable – Last Of the Nantucket Wampanoag Indians

“The Last Indians Of Nantucket Island”
This is a historical / biographical work
based on the public domain book
“The Nantucket Indians”
by R.A. Douglas-Lithgow
with edits, notes, images, arangement
by Larry W Jones

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FOREWORD

Modern scientific opinion favors the belief that the American-Indian race represents the indigenous people of the great American Continent. Professor Robert Hugh Pritchard says: “The era of their existence as a distinct and insulated race must probably be dated as far back as that time which separated into nations the inhabitants of the Old World, and gave to each branch of the human family its primitive language and individuality.” The Indian tribes of New England belonged to the great Algonquian Confederacy—the most widely extended of all the North American Indians—their territory stretching along the Atlantic coast from Labrador to Pamlico sound, and westward, from Newfoundland to the Rocky Mountains. The three principal Massachusetts tribes were the Massachusetts or Naticks, the Nipmucks, and the Wampanoags, the latter under the dominance of Massasoit when the Pilgrims arrived, and, at that time, the third greatest nation in New England.

With regard to the primeval discovery of the island of Nantucket by the Indians the following legend is interesting, (as all legends are), and it was related by the aborigines to the early English settlers, soon after their arrival: In former times, a good many moons ago, a bird, extraordinary for its size, used often to visit the south shore of Cape Cod, and carry from thence in its talons a vast number of small children.

Maushope, who was an Indian giant, resided in these parts. Enraged at the havoc among the children, he, on a certain time, waded into the sea in pursuit of the bird, till he had crossed the sound, and reached Nantucket Island. Before Maushope forded the sound, the island was unknown to the red men. Maushope found the bones of the children in a heap under a large tree.

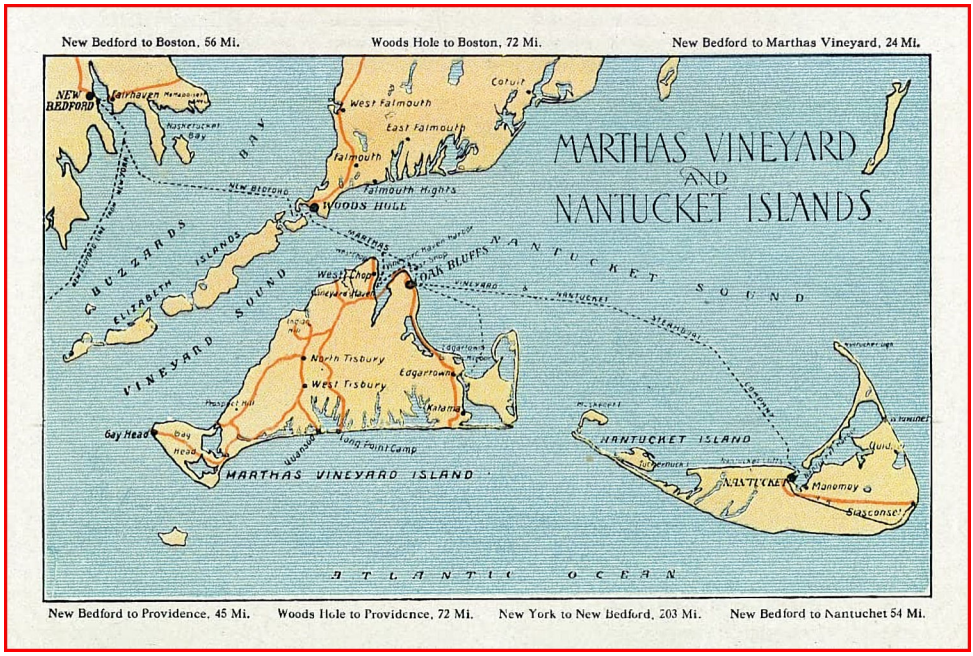
He, then, wishing to smoke his pipe, ransacked the island for tobacco; but finding none, he filled his pipe with poke—a weed which the Indians sometimes used as a substitute for tobacco. "Ever since this memorable event, fogs have been frequent on the Cape. In allusion to this tradition, when the aborigines observed a fog rising, they would say, 'There comes old Maushope's smoke.' (Here the legend unfortunately ends.)

The island of Nantucket, when first settled by the whites, was occupied by two tribes whose names have not been preserved. One occupied the west end of the island, and was supposed to have come from the mainland by way of Martha's Vineyard. The other lived at the east end, and is said to have come direct from the mainland. The two tribes were independent and were, at a time, hostile to each other. The tribe which came from Martha's Vineyard was subject to the Wampanoags.

When the original discovery of the island of Nantucket was made by foreigners is still a moot point, many writers alleging that two hardy Norsemen, Bjorne Herjulfson, in A. D. 986, and Leif Ericsson, in A. D. 1000, during their respective voyages, had both sighted the New England coast, and that Leif had visited Nantucket, and bestowed upon it the name of Nauticon. If this is probable, it is equally probable that the name Nauticon was merely a Norse approximation to the original Indian name of the island, Natocket. It is now generally believed, however, that neither of these navigators got nearer to the New England coast than Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, although there is much to be said on both sides of the question.

John Cabot, the navigator—of Italian birth—settled in Bristol, England, in the time of Henry VII., and he obtained a patent from the King "for the purpose of discovering unknown lands in the eastern, western and northern seas." His son Sebastian Cabot accompanied him, and in 1497–1498, they cruised along the coast of America from Florida to Labrador. The claim of the English Government to Nantucket, Martha's Vineyard and the Elizabeth Islands was based upon these voyages of the Cabots.

Nantucket, however, looms out of mythland and into genuine history, when, in June or July, 1602, Bartholomew Gosnold, an English mariner, landed upon its shore at Sankaty Head, when he, and some thirty sailors, were en route for Virginia, seeking a new plantation. In May, 1605, Captain Weymouth is said to have "become entangled among the Nantucket Shoals", and in 1620 Captain Thomas Dermer did certainly visit the island.



John Cabot c. 1450 – c. 1500

The Settlement and the Indians

The story of the transfer of the Island of Nantucket from the English Government to Thomas Mayhew, and from him and the Indians to the white settlers, has so often been told that a mere summary is all that is required here, in order to preserve the continuity of the narrative.

Nantucket was included in the Royal grant to Plymouth Company in 1621, and Lord Stirling and Sir Ferdinand Gorges were the Commissioners deputed to promote the colonization of the territory, including the islands south of Cape Cod.

Lord Stirling appointed James Forrett as his agent in New York for the sale or other disposal of the Colony, and Forrett sold the island of Nantucket, in 1641, (when it was under the jurisdiction of the Province of New York), to Thomas Mayhew, an Englishman, who emigrated to New England in 1631, and who first settled at Watertown. Mayhew not only purchased Nantucket, and the adjacent islands, but became a part proprietor of Martha's Vineyard and Governor of that island. He is said to have been a good colonizer—always a friend to the Indians—and was the means of preventing them from engaging in King Philip's War. He founded Edgartown in 1647, and from him were descended numerous missionaries to the Indians, amongst whom they had much influence, and spoke the Indian language fluently.

(**Note**) King Philip's War (sometimes called the First Indian War, Metacom's War, Metacomet's War, Pometacomet's Rebellion, or Metacom's Rebellion) was an armed conflict in 1675–1676 between indigenous inhabitants of New England and New England colonists and their indigenous allies. The war is named for Metacom, the Wampanoag chief who adopted the name Philip because of the friendly relations between his father Massasoit and the Mayflower Pilgrims. The war continued in the most northern reaches of New England until the signing of the Treaty of Casco Bay on April 12, 1678.

The islands remained in the possession of the Mayhews (father and son), until 1659, when they were transferred to ten purchasers, including Mayhew himself, (as he reserved to himself and his heirs one-twentieth part of the property for his own use.)

From a reliable genealogy of the Coffin family, it appears that in the spring of 1659 "Tristram Coffin proceeded upon a voyage of inquiry and observation—first to Martha's Vineyard where he secured Peter Folger, the grandfather of Benjamin Franklin, as an interpreter of the Indian language; and thence to Nantucket,

his object being to ascertain the temper and disposition of the Indians, and the capabilities of the island, so that he might report to the citizens of Salisbury what inducements for emigration thither were offered." He was evidently impressed favorably by what he saw and heard, for, when he returned to Salisbury, Mass., a company was formed, and the purchase of the island determined. In the autumn of 1659 Thomas Macy, Edward Starbuck, James Coffin, Isaac Coleman and some of their wives and children sailed in an open boat for Nantucket, where they arrived safely, and spent the winter of 1659–60 on the island. In July, 1660, Starbuck returned to Salisbury and Amesbury, and induced a number of families to accompany him back to Nantucket, and as time went on the little colony received numerous additions.

Most, if not all, of the English settlers came from Salisbury, Mass., and its neighborhood. Each of the original colonists was permitted to name an associate, so that the island was primarily divided into twenty shares, and as these were anxious to add to their number, and to induce artisans and mechanics to come among them, the number of shares was ultimately increased to twenty-seven, these including the entire island, with the exception of the "common" land, and that reserved by Mr. Mayhew for his own use.

During the next hundred years—say from 1664 to 1774—the records contain the many transfers of lots of land deeded by the Indians to the English, until, indeed, the entire island became the property of the white settlers. Before the legal purchase of the island could be ratified, it was necessary to secure the sanction of the representative Indian chiefs (Sachem) and this was duly obtained as appears from the following deed, dated May 10th, 1660:

SACHEMS' DEED OF NANTUCKET

These presents witness, May the tenth, sixteen hundred and sixty, that we, Wanackmamack and Nickanoose, head Sachems of Nantucket island, do give, grant, bargain, and sell unto Mr. Thomas Mayhew of Marthas Vineyard, Tristram Coffin, Senior, Thomas Macy, Christopher Hussey, Richard Swain, Peter Coffin, Stephen Greenleaf, Thomas Barnard, John Swain and William Pile, all the Land, Meadow, Marshes, Timber and Wood, and all appurtenances thereunto belonging, and being and lying from the west end of the island of Nantucket, unto the Pond, called by the Indians, Waqutuquab, and from the head of that Pond, upon a straight line, unto the Pond situated by Monomoy Harbor or Creek, now called Wheeler's Creek, and so from the northeast corner of the said Pond to the sea, that is to say, all the right that we, the aforesaid Sachems have in the said tract of land, provided that none of the Indian Inhabitants, in or about the woodland, or whatsoever Indians, within the last purchase of land, from the head of the Pond to Monomoy Harbor, shall be removed without full satisfaction. And we, the aforesaid Sachems, do give, grant, bargain and sell, the one-half of the remainder of the meadows and marshes upon all other parts of the Island. And also that the English people shall have what grass they shall need for to mow, out of the remainder of the meadows and marshes on the Island, so long as the English remain upon the Island, and also free liberty for timber and wood upon any part of the Island within the jurisdiction. And also, we, the aforesaid Sachems, do full grant free liberty to the English for the feeding all sorts of cattle on any part of the Island, after Indian Harvest is ended until planting time, or until the first day of May, from year to year forever, for and in consideration of twelve pounds already paid, and fourteen pounds to be paid within three months after the date hereof.

To have and to hold the aforesaid purchase of land, and other appurtenances, as aforementioned, to them, Mr. Thomas Macy, Tristram Coffin, Thomas Mayhew, and the rest aforementioned, and their heirs and assigns forever. In witness whereof, we the said Sachems, have hereunto set our hands and seals, the day and year above written.

The sign of Wanackmamack [S]

The sign of Nickanoose [S]

Signed, sealed and delivered, in the presence of us:

Peter Folger, Felix Kuttashamaquat, Edward Starbuck.

I do witness this deed to be a true deed, according to the interpretation of Felix the interpreter; also I heard Wanackmamack, but two weeks ago, say that the sale made by Nickanoose and he should be good, and that they would do so, whatever comes of it. Witness my hand, this 17th day of first month, 1664. PETER FOLGER.

Witness: Mary Starbuck.

The mark of John (I. C.) Coffin.

Wanackmamack and Nickanoose acknowledge the above written to be their act and deed, in the presence of the General Court, this 12th of June, 1667, as attest.

MATTHEW MAYHEW, Secretary to the General Court.

(**Note**) Peter Folger was born in England, the son of John Folger Jr. and Meribah Gibbs. He left Norwich, Norfolk, England for America in 1635, settling initially in Watertown, Massachusetts, and later moving to Martha's Vineyard, where he worked as a teacher and surveyor. His father, John, a widower, came to the colonies in 1636 and ultimately settled in Martha's Vineyard. In 1644, he married Mary Morrell, whom he met on the voyage from England. Morrell was an indentured servant and Folger bought her freedom from Hugh Peters for £20. They had nine children by 1669, the last of whom, Abiah Folger, married Josiah Franklin, and was the mother of Benjamin Franklin. At the Vineyard, Folger supported himself by teaching school and surveying land. He was hired by Governor Thomas Mayhew and his son Thomas Mayhew Jr. to convert the Native American population to Christianity, during which time he learned to speak the native language. He was a Baptist in faith, and as such was told not to visit with the Puritans on the mainland. Rev. Experience Mayhew, in a letter to John Gardner, Esquire, dated 1694, states that when Thomas Mayhew, Jr. left for England in 1657, he left the care of his church and mission to Peter Folger. From time to time between 1659 and 1662, Folger journeyed to Nantucket in order to survey it for the proprietors. He was an interpreter for Tristram Coffin. In 1663 Folger moved to Nantucket full-time, having been granted a half a share of land by the proprietors, where he was a surveyor, an Indian interpreter, and clerk in the courts. Shortly thereafter, Folger's daughter, Abiah, was born, later to become the mother of Benjamin Franklin.

It is rather curious that this deed, although duly witnessed on May 10th, 1660, was not confirmed by Peter Folger until January first, 1664, and did not receive official attestation by the Secretary of the General Court until the 12th of June, 1677.

This deed purchased the island from the original patentee and a greater part of it from the Indians, and the English are said to have paid £26 for it. Almost a year before the execution of the above deed, however, what is known as "The First Indian Deed" was executed by Nickanoose and Nanahuma on June 20th, 1659. It is as follows:

"This doth witness that we Nickanoose of Nantucket, Sachem, and Nanahuma of Nantucket, Sachem, have sold unto Thomas Mayhew of the Vineyard the plain at the west end of Nantucket that is according to the figure under written, to him and his heirs and assigns forever. In consideration whereof we have received by earnest of the said Thomas Mayhew the sum of twelve pounds. Also the said Sachems have sold the said Mayhew of the Vineyard the use of the meadow and to take wood for the use of him, the said Mayhew, his heirs and assigns forever." "In witness hereof, we the Sachems aforesaid have hereunto set our hands this 20th of June, 1659." "The said Acamy lyeth north and by east, and south by west or near it."

NICKANOOSE, + (his mark.) NANAHUMA, × (his mark.) Witness hereunto:
Mr. Harry, John Coleman, Thomas Macy, Tristram Coffin.

I shall refer more particularly to this deed presently.

As an example of further deeds the following may be quoted.

January 5th, 1660, Nickanoose out of free voluntary love for Edward Starbuck gave him "Coretue", which was reassigned by Edward Starbuck, August 30th, 1668.

May 10th, 1660, Wanackmamack and Nicornoose, Head Sachems of Nantucket, sold unto the first purchasers between west end of island and pond called by the Indians Waqutuquat (Waquittaquah)—then on a straight line to pond by Monomoy harbour; also half of remainder of meadows and marshes on all other parts of the island.

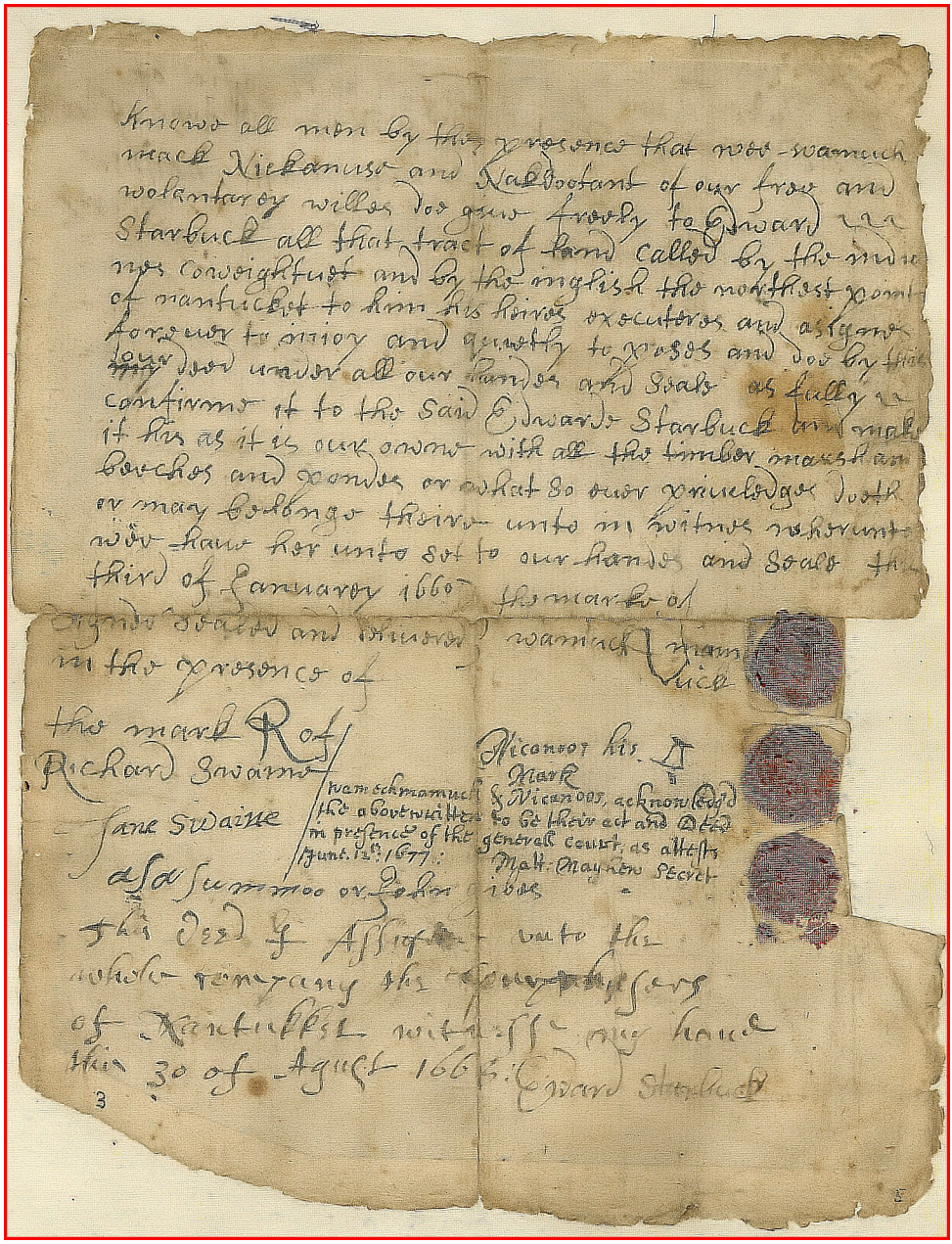
Witnessed by Peter Folger, Edward Starbuck and Felix Kuttashamaquat.

June 22d, 1662, Wanackmamack signed a deed conveying a neck of land in the eastern section of the island known as Pocomo Neck. This was witnessed by the younger Wauwinet, son of Nickanoose and by Peter Folger. The purchase was made by Tristram Coffin and Thomas Macy.

February 20th, 1661, Wanackmamack, Head Sachem, sold the west half of Nantucket.

November 18th, 1671, shows that Tristram Coffin bought of Wanackmamack and Nicornoose from Monomoy to Waquittaquage pond, Nanahumack Neck, and all from Wesco to the West end of Nantucket. June 20th, 1682, Deed of Nicornoose, Sachem, to James Coffin, William Worth and John Swain—the grass and herbage of all his lands from Indian harvest to first of May.

And thus the land sales go on, until 1774, when the sachems and Indians had virtually sold every spot in their possession to the English.



Knowe all men by this presence that wee wamuch
mack Nickanuse and Nabbootant of our free and
voluntary willes doe give freely to Edward
Starbuck all that tract of land called by the Indi
ans Conaighcut and by the inglish the northest point
of nantucket to him his heirs executors and assigne
forever to enjoy and quietly to possess and doe by these
presents for us our heirs executors and assigne
confirme it to the said Edward Starbuck to make
it his as it is our owne with all the timber trees
beeches and woodes or what so ever priviledge doth
or may belonge thereunto in witnes whereunto
we have hereunto set to our hands and seals this
third of January 1660 the marke of
signed sealed and deliver wamuch Niam
in the presence of Nuca

the marke of
Richard Swaine
Jane Swaine

wamachmamuch the above written in presence of the Court June 12th 1677:

Nicanoos his mark
& Nicanoos acknowledged to be their act and deed
generall court as attests
Mall: Mayhew Secret

also Sumpoo or Peter
this deed of Assigne unto this
whole company the purchasers
of Nantucket with the[ir] own hands
this 30 of August 166[5] Edward Starbuck

3

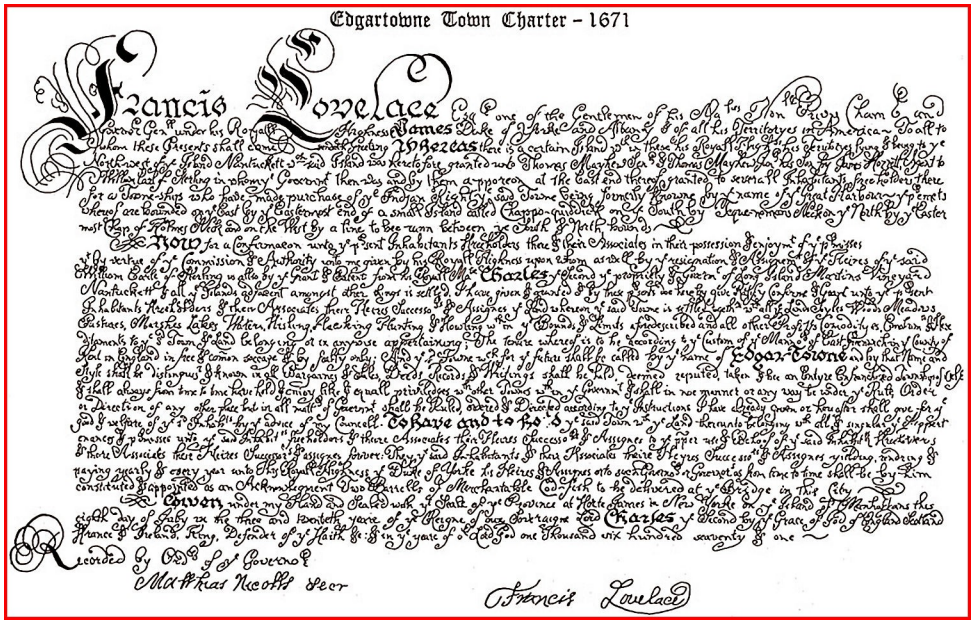
Wamuchmack & Nicanoos (Nickanoose) to Edward Starbuck, 1659

Nantucket Historical Association

As Mr. H. B. Worth aptly points out, “Nickanoose signed deeds only of territory belonging to some other sachem; the fact is true of Wanackmamack. Neither signed a deed of any portion of the territory under his direct control. The western Nantucket Sachem, Attapehat (Autopscot), as far as has been found never signed any deed.”

I can only account for these facts, by assuming that these Chief Sachems thought it beneath their dignity to sign deeds conveying their own property, while, at the same time they permitted no deeds to be signed without their approval and attestation. This may appear a lame suggestion, but it is the best I can offer.

The Provincial Governor of New York in 1671, (Lord Lovelace), thought it desirable to obtain a new deed from the Sachems, attesting the legality of the land sales, and an assurance that the stipulated terms had been duly complied with, before issuing a new patent. The necessary proofs were furnished in that year by Wanackmamack the Chief Sachem.

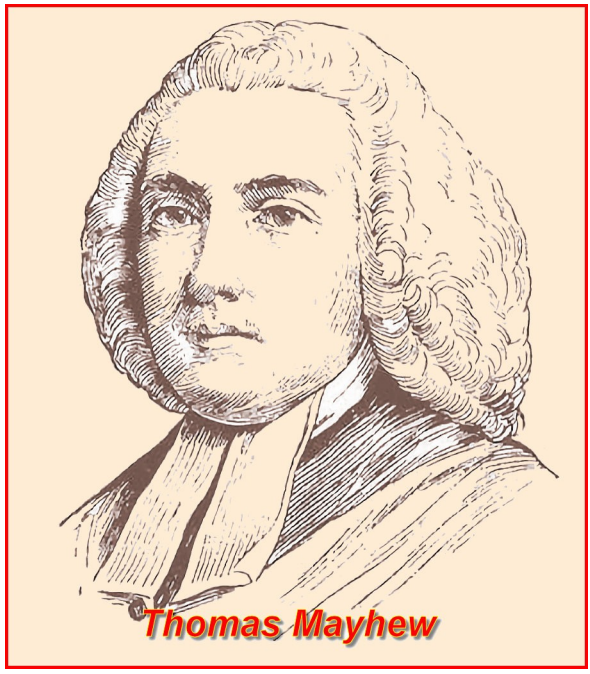

Edgartowne Town Charter – 1671

Francis Lovelace

Edgar-Towne

Charles

Francis Lovelace



It may be stated here that Mr. Thomas Mayhew,—the original purchaser of the island, had acquired a good knowledge of the Indian language in association with the Indians of the more western island; and that Peter Folger who also resided at Martha's Vineyard, was, in 1663, engaged by Tristram Coffin as interpreter, and to officiate in Nantucket, as miller, weaver and surveyor.

What has been written thus far will, it is hoped, serve to illustrate the conditions under which the white settlers became established on Nantucket, and I now propose to deal briefly with the Indians whom they found there on their arrival. It may be noted that the names of many of the original white settlers are perpetuated in teeming numbers among the inhabitants of Nantucket until the present day.

With regard to the number of Indians occupying the island when the whites arrived the statements vary considerably, some writers alleging 3000, others 1500, and some still less. There is some difficulty in forming a correct estimate, but it is known as a fact that they only numbered about 360 before they became victims to the epidemic which destroyed so many of them.

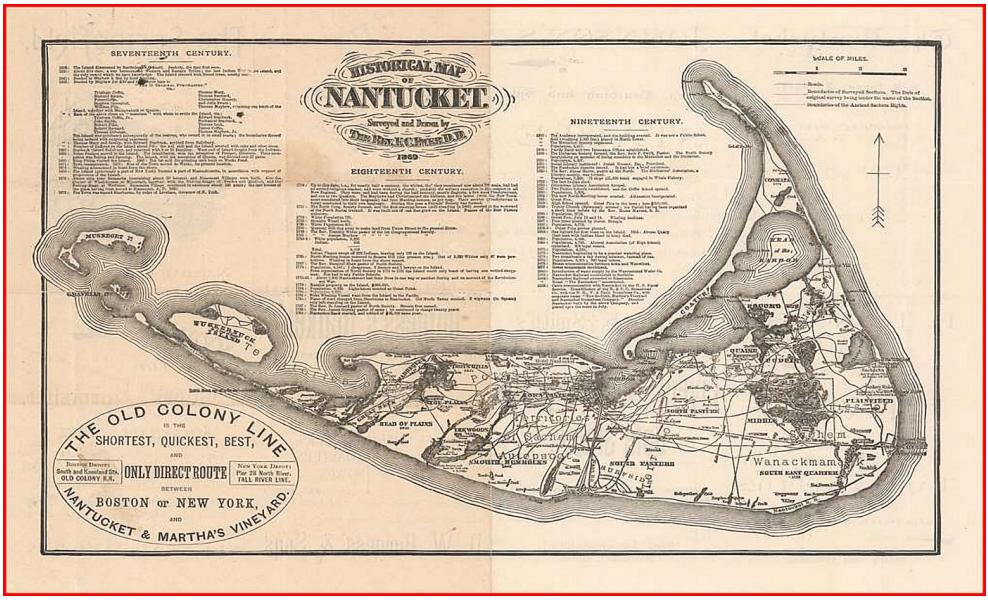
When Nantucket was purchased by the colonists in 1659, there were two Chief Sachems Wanackmamack and Nicornoose (acting probably for Wauwinet), and at least two other Sachems, Autopscot (or Attapehat) and Potconet—besides a few petty Sachems—governing all the Indians on Nantucket and Tuckernuck. It may be assumed that at this time Wauwinet was old and feeble, and that his eldest son, known as Nicornoose, acted as his deputy, inasmuch as among several of the earliest deeds we find Nicornoose signing as Sachem,

and there are no signatures by his father. Mr. Zaccheus Macy, in his valuable letter to the Massachusetts Historical Society, dated October 2d, 1792 mentions Wauwinet as living when the settlers arrived, but alludes to him as “the old Sachem.” Among the Indian tribes there were generally one or two Sachems who controlled all the others. These were known as Chief or Head Sachems, and they exercised absolute control. Such in Nantucket were Wanackmamack and Wauwinet or his son and successor, Nicornoose.

According to Zaccheus Macy, Wanackmamack’s territory represented the southeast of the island and was bounded by a line running from Toupchue pond in the south, northward, roughly to Gibbs’ pond, and so over toward Podpis swamp, and then eastward to Sesacacha pond.

These, and the boundaries of the other Sachems’ property are clearly delineated on Dr. Ewer’s map of Nantucket.

Engraving depicting European explorers, possibly in Newfoundland, witnessing Native American whaling practices.



1889 Ferdinand Cartwright Ewer Map of Nantucket

with "The Old Colony Line" Ad

Wanackmamack had one son, Saucoauso or Jeptha, who married Eastor.

Saucoauso had two sons, Cain and Abel.

Cain had one daughter, Jemima, who married James Shay, Shea or Shaa.

Abel had two sons, Ben Abel and Eben Abel.

Wanackmamack died before June 9th, 1682, because his son, Saucoauso, on this date, "having understood that his father Wanackmamack now deceased, had granted (to) English pasturage on east end of island, also sells same."

Wauwinet's boundary-line adjoined that of Wanackmamack on the north, extending due north to Coatue and Nauma, westward to Wesco (now Nantucket), and hence, almost due south to Weeweder pond.

Wauwinet had two sons, Isaac or Nicornoose, (also known as Nickanoose) and Waupordongga, and one daughter, Wonoma, who married Autopscot.

Nicornoose had two sons, Joshua and Isaac Wauwinet, and one daughter, Askommopoo, by his wife. Askommopoo married Spoospotswa, known as "Spotso."

Nicornoose forsook his wife and, by another woman, had two sons, Wat and Paul Noose.

Joshua Nicornoose was so disgusted by his father's leaving his mother that he left home altogether, and did not return until after an absence of over 50 years, when he claimed his inheritance and after some delay, it was restored to him.

Autopscot's jurisdiction extended over the southwest of the island from Weeweder pond northerly to Monomoy, and then westward to the Popsquatchet hills and to Hummock pond.

Description - Poorly drained wetland, fresh or saltwater, wooded or grassy, possibly covered with open water. Two marshes on Nantucket Island 2.5 mi S of Nantucket; Town of Nantucket. Indian word meaning "a pair of Horns" recorded as "weeweder Pond" on a 1690 deed.

Autopscot had a son, Harry Poritain, or Beretan, by Wonoma, his wife, who was the daughter of Wauwinet.

Harry Poritain had a son named Isaac Masauquet.

Masauquet had a son named Peter.

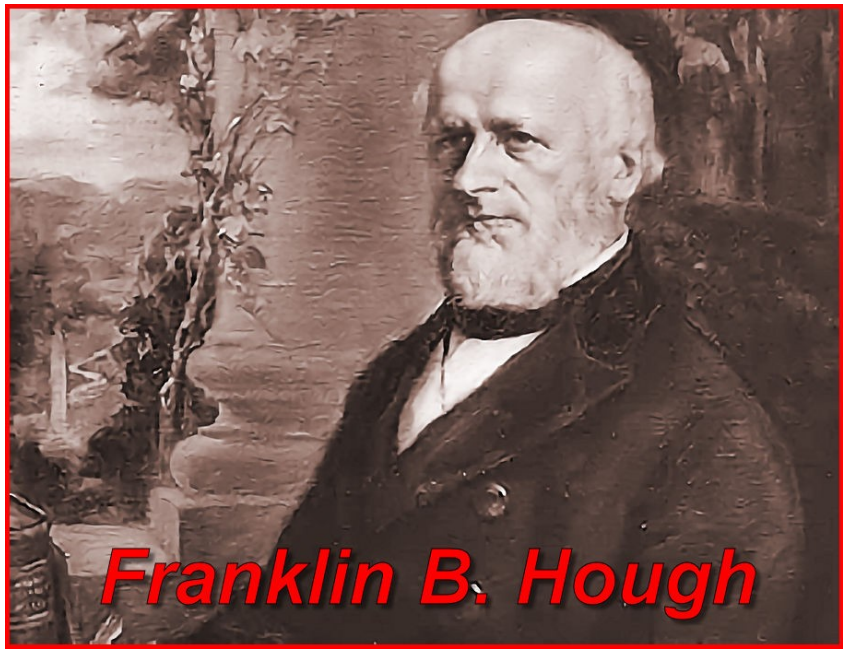
Peter had a son known as Lame Isaac, who ceded the last rights of his sachemdom.

Autopscot had also grandchildren named Tashama, of whom more anon.

Potconet's (or Pottacohannet's) dominions are uncertain, and there is some doubt as to their limitations. It is at least certain that he was Sachem of the adjacent island of Tuckernuck, but Zaccheus Macy, in his well known letter, states that his bounds extended from Madaket down eastward to Wesko and Capaum pond, thus lying north of Autopscot's possessions, and that they also included the western coast. Moreover, Dr. Ewer's map,—probably based upon the information supplied by Macy—delineates the northwestern section of the island as having belonged to Potconet; but no proof is in evidence, and although it seems reasonable to suppose that some sachem must have represented this section of the island, no deed has been found to cover it. Macy also asserts that Potconet sold all his rights to the English settlers, save those reserved and secured to some of the old natives, known as the Hoights and Jafets—in the neighborhood of Wannacomet or Capaum pond.

Be this as it may, from a foot-note to Franklin B. Hough's Nantucket Papers, it appears that, on February 20th, 1661, Wanackmamack, Head-Chief of Nantucket, sold to Tristram Coffin, Sr., Peter Coffin, Tristram Coffin, Jr., and James Coffin, for £10, half of the island of Tuckernuck—one half down, and the other, when Thomas Mayhew decides who is the proper owner. Potconet, or Pottacohannet had two sons, Akeamong, or Ahkeiman, and Jacob.

Why did neither of these sons claim his rights until 1672—a period of 11 years? Was Potconet living in 1661? These questions have still to be answered, although I have unsuccessfully sought in every direction for a satisfactory reply. In the Registry of Nantucket Deeds, under date June 20, 1672, is the following entry: "Ahkeiman laying claim to part of Tuckanuck his claim thereto is found no other but21 as he was a duke or principal man upon Nantucket; the Nantucket Sachems, together with his father, having sold Tuckanuck, it is ordered that he shall have such a part or portion of land for his use at Nantucket of the present Sachems as will become one of such quality, and a portion of the whales."



On page 211 of the Book of Town Records, dated March, 1681, there is a record of a bargain between James Coffin, Peter Coffin, John Coffin, and Stephen Coffin, and Ackeamong and Jacob, sons of Pottacohannet (Potconet), concerning Tuckanuckett, said Ackeamong and Jacob claiming half of it. The said Coffins having delivered them 40 acres arable land on Nantucket and £5, and disclaiming any right to any whale, the said Ackeamong and Jacob renounce any claim to any part of Tuckernuck, reserving liberty to save their whale that may come ashore.

To this is affixed the marks of Ackeamong and Jacob, James Coffin and Stephen Coffin, 6th of March, 1681. Witnessed by William Worth and Richard Pincom (Pinkham), and acknowledged on the same date before William Worth, magistrate. It does not appear, however, why the order of the Court made in 1672, was not carried out until 1681—a period of nine years. Potconet must therefore, have died before March 6th, 1681, or his sons could not have made the above agreement; if, indeed, he was not dead before 1672, when Akeamong made his first claim.

Some confusion has arisen as to the standing of Nanahuma, who signed the first Indian deed with Nickanoose. Mr. H. Barnard Worth says: ... “They (the English) obtained a deed, dated June 20th, 1659, from the 22Sachems Nickanoose and Nanahuma, of a tract comprising the section of Nantucket west of Hummock Pond. George Nanahuma was the sachem of the Indians that lived in this section but Nickanoose held some sway over him, and joined in the conveyance.” With this I am in perfect accord, with the exception of Mr. Worth’s using the definite instead of the indefinite article, as indicated in boldface in the above quotation. I believe that it should read thus: “Comprising a section of Nantucket west of Hummock Pond”; and further, “George Nanahuma was a sachem of the Indians, etc.” The force of this will be seen presently.

(**Note on the Coffin Brothers**) The Coffin family was prominent in the history of whaling in the United States, operating ships out of Nantucket, Massachusetts, from the 17th to 19th centuries. Some members of the family gained wider exposure due to their discovery of various islands in the Pacific Ocean. Tristram Coffin, born in 1609 in England, sailed for America in 1642, first settling in Newbury, Massachusetts, then moving to Nantucket. The Coffins, along with other Nantucket families, including the Gardners and the Starbucks, began whaling seriously in the 1690s in local waters, and by 1715 the family owned three whaling ships (whalers) and a trade vessel. In 1763, six Coffin men were captains of Nantucket ships which sailed as far as South America and Greenland.

James J. Coffin - On 31 May 1823, the British whaler Transit arrived in Batavia, on the island of Java, having lost its master, Captain Alexander, to a whale near Christmas Island. James Coffin was on Java at the time and was appointed as captain. Later that year, while working in the central Pacific, James is said to have discovered Enderbury Island in the Phoenix group, naming it after the London whaling firm Samuel Enderby & Sons. However, when he described his own discoveries of the Bonins to Arrowsmith and other geographers, he did not mention Enderbury. On September 12, 1824, he discovered the southern group of the Bonin Islands.

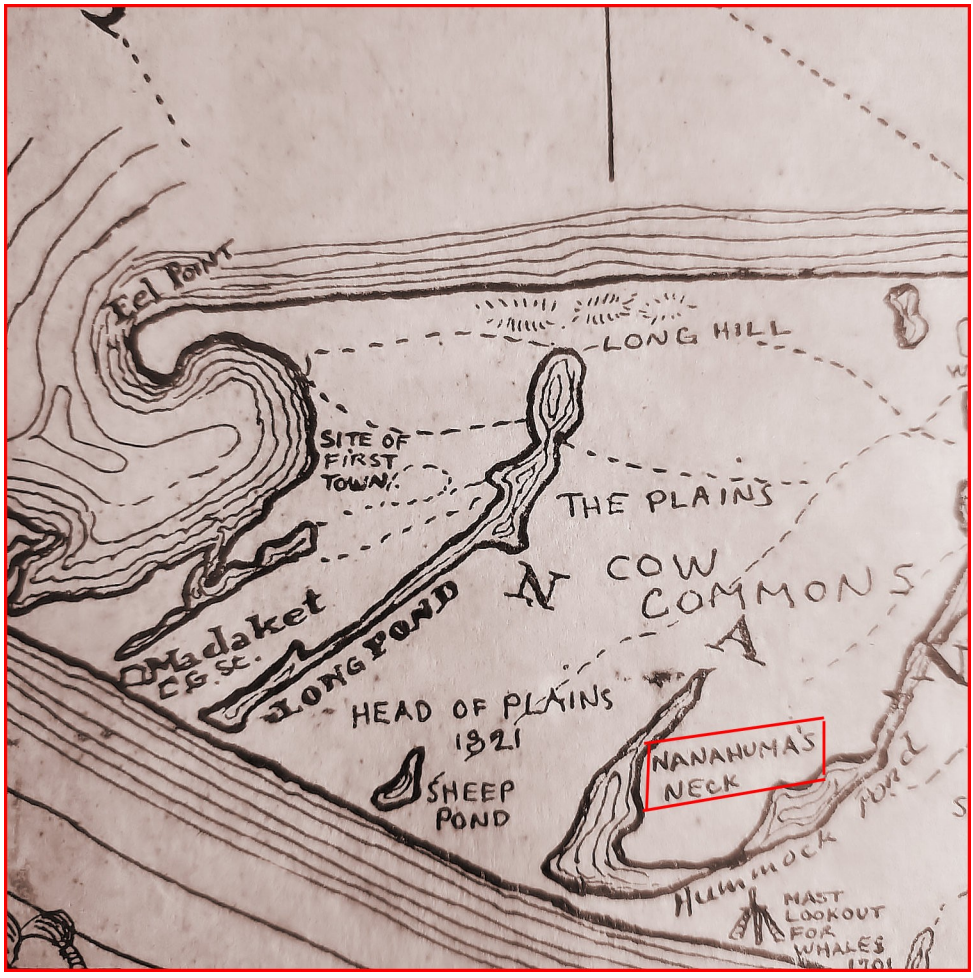
Joshua Coffin - Some records suggest that Joshua, while captaining the whaler Ganges, sighted and named Gardner Island in the Phoenix Group in 1825, probably naming it after U.S. Congressman Gideon Gardner, the owner of Ganges. Alternative sources claim the island was sighted by whaler Joshua Gardner, also reported to have captained Ganges in 1825.

Reuben Coffin - Some sources report that in 1823 or 1824, a "Reuben Coffin" was captain of an American whaler named Transit, out of Nantucket, and was responsible for the discovery of the Bonin Islands. Anchoring unchallenged off Haha Jima, he claimed the islands for the United States, naming them "Coffin Islands".

Owen Coffin - Owen Coffin (1802–1821) was a teenaged sailor aboard the Nantucket whaler Essex when it set sail for the Pacific Ocean on a sperm whaling expedition in August 1819. In November the next year, a whale (Moby Dick) rammed and breached their hull in mid-Pacific, causing Essex to sink. Following months in a small whaleboat, members of the near-starving crew finally concluded a member must be sacrificed. They drew lots, which Owen Coffin "lost," and he was shot and eaten.

The western half of Nantucket was sold by Wanackmamack, February 20th, 1661. There is no deed to prove who was the legitimate sachem, if any existed, of the Western section of Nantucket, but a section west of Hummock pond apparently belonged to Nanahuma, the neck which bears his name, part of the woods to the north of it, and he possibly may have had a proprietary interest in the large plain further west. I think this view is borne out in the “first Indian Deed.” In this deed “the plain” is evidently immediately west of Nanahuma’s Neck from the use of the word Acamy in the deed (“on the other side of the water”),

and its locality is further fixed by the description of its position, which agrees almost mathematically with its exact actual position. I am sorry to differ from Mr. Worth when he says: “the deed of Nanahuma indicates that at the time he was sachem over the west end of Nantucket.” It might as truly be said that the co-signer was sachem over the west end of Nantucket, which we know he never was.



I believe that Nanahuma was a subsidiary or petty local sachem, tributary to Nickanoose, and that all the property he owned as a sachem was restricted within the limitations already indicated.

This is confirmed by his only subsequent deed, dated June 24th, 1678, by which he disposes of “all his interest in the West plains, and to the Neck or long woods” to the English. Besides, according to the delimitation of the other Sachems as already given, none of them interfered with those just mentioned as belonging to Nanahuma.

Indeed, it is doubtful whether Nanahuma at this time owned the Neck which bore his name, for, on July 4th, 1664, “all the fields belonging to the Neck” were sold to the English by Pakapanessa, Jonas Kimmo and Harry, son of Wapakowet, who were probably residents of the identical “plain” which was sold by Nanahuma in 1659. Moreover, in 1667, we find Nanahuma associated with “Mr. Larry Ahkeramo” and Obadiah in a plea to the Court that “whereas the sachems had sold the ground they formerly lived on to the English, the said sachems would not entertain them on the land unsold.” Curiously enough, in 1678, we find George Nanahuma, alias Cowpohanet, selling to the English “all his interest in the West plains, and to the Neck or long woods.” There, verily, seems to have been a joint stock company in these lands!

If Potconet had no jurisdiction over the northwest section of Nantucket, and if no evidence is in existence as to any other sachem holding predominant rights over it, may it not be suggested that it was mainly divided up into reallotments for the Indians who were dispossessed by the requirements of the whites, and over whom subsidiary sachems or sagamores were appointed, of whom there were several? Of course, this is a mere suggestion.

We talk glibly and deprecatingly of the poor Indians as “mere savages”, but the annals of American history afford but few instances of really nobler men than Massassoit, Passaconaway, Samoset, and Wanackmamack, the controlling Head Sachem of Nantucket. Had it not been for the high personal qualities of such men New England might not have occupied today the proud position which she now holds among the United States.

The venerable Chief Wanackmamack was not only the pride and glory of his insular braves, but the tried, true, and loyal friend of the English immigrants. He was as kind-hearted and judicious as he was courageous and high principled, and he governed his home-land so ably and satisfactorily as to justify his memory in history as an exemplary ruler.

Of Wauwinet little is known but that he was very old and much respected when the settlers arrived, and nothing, so far as I have been able to ascertain, has been said against him.

Nicornoose, his eldest son and successor, has not a good record, as he deserted his wife and children, and had two children by another woman.

Beyond the fact that Autopscot was called “a great warrior and got his land by his bow”, and that he permanently established peace throughout the island, little further is recorded of him. Nor does history mention anything concerning Potconet, the sachem ruling the proximate western islands, with the exception of a record of the sale of his lands to the settlers, in 1659. Such were the rulers of Nantucket when the settlers arrived.

What a revelation the incoming of the whites must have been to the red men, who had lived on the island, probably from a very early age, among their own people, under their own laws, perpetuating their own habits and customs—living close to Nature—for the most part in peace25 and amity—simple in their lives, and knowing nothing, caring nothing for the external world beyond them!

Yet, on the arrival of the new people who had come to supplant them, they received them amicably, treated them justly, and as they treated one another, relying upon what they recognized as the instinctive and inalienable principles of humanity to govern their relationships and to promote the mutual good and harmony of all. I cannot stop to inquire who first took advantage of the racial differences which distinguished these two peoples, or how the greater intellectuality and experience of the one eventually overcame the other, but Time tells the story; and today, while the whites glory in the beauties of, and the opportunities afforded by their island home, where are the poor Indians, the aborigines? All gone—melted away like dew-drops in the sun, and not even one remains to tell the story of their past history!

The number of settlers who had arrived from Salisbury in 1660 and 1661 soon began to make themselves comfortable in their new and strange environment, while the Indians could not but admire the novel type of dwelling houses which the new-comers had set up in strange contrast with the humble wigwams of the aborigines; indeed the new procedure which was being introduced in many directions must have caused them much surprise.

For a time the English and the Indians—the civilized and the uncivilized—worked together amicably for the agricultural development of the island. Together they cleared and tilled the land (for the most part existing as a primeval wilderness), settling the allotments, cutting down the timber, which is said to have almost covered the island, and mutually performing the numerous farming operations involved in the reclamation and cultivation of the soil. In addition to farming they engaged also in fishing, in which art the natives were expert. Much time was also devoted to the raising of sheep, and thus while mutual forbearance was exercised, mutual trust was generated, and while the settlers acted faithfully and justly with the Indians, the latter were equally loyal in the discharge of their duties in their new relationships.

When King Philip visited the island in 1665 and tried to induce the natives to join in his contemplated war with the English, they emphatically refused to do so, expressing themselves as perfectly satisfied and desiring to be at peace with the whites. Indeed, at a town meeting, on October 10th, 1665, Attaychat (Autopscot) “signified that himself with all the Tomokommoth Indians subject to the English Government in Nantucket, acknowledge subjection to King Charles II. This was done in the presence of Metacomet, alias Philip, Sachem of Mount Hop.”

Unfortunately, civilization has too often brought in its wake habits and customs which have ever proved degenerative, if not destructive to the uncivilized races of the earth, and so they proved to the Indians, who were sober, industrious, and happy before the settlers introduced among them the iniquitous “fire-water,” to the abuse of which they fell a prey. Acting under its pernicious influence their primitive instincts were aroused within them, and never afterwards were they the same people. Discontent soon spread among them, and litigation in the Courts—to which they had equal access with the whites—became so very frequent that the records extend from 1673 to 1754.

I do not say that alcohol was at the bottom of all these cases, but that it made the natives excitable, litigious and dissatisfied I avow, without any reference to the misconduct and crime which it often prompted, and which frequently resulted from its influence. In many cases they found that the Courts decided against them,

and they became discouraged. Moreover, they were astounded at the fastly-increasing number of whites on the island (so that offensive measures were out of the question), and as a matter of fact they never could be made to understand that the execution of a sale-deed of their property involved its absolute surrender to the purchaser, however many attempts they made to regain their land.

Mr. Thomas Macy wrote a forceful letter to the Governor, in May, 1676, as to the pernicious effects of drink upon the natives, but every effort made to mitigate the evil by legislative measures failed; the natives who craved for it would sacrifice all they possessed, and one way and another, they generally found means of obtaining it. Fines and whipping were the modes inflicted for drunkenness and misdemeanors, but the death-penalty was never exacted except in cases of deliberate murder. It is recorded that, between 1704 and 1769, ten natives were executed for capital crimes.

On the other hand it has been stated that Quibby—who murdered Harry Gardner—was the first and only Indian executed in Nantucket since its settlement by the whites. Macy's instances, however, seem well substantiated.

In thus alluding to the misconduct of the natives I am merely mentioning facts which I should have preferred to pass over, but in justice to their memory it must be said that perhaps the majority of them were exemplary in their lives—many of them pious—and good steady husbandmen and craftsmen. As a race they have been much misrepresented, and if revengeful, it was only when their subduers had treated them cruelly or unjustly.

Spirited efforts had been made to introduce Christianity among the natives, and the results on Nantucket were probably more successful than in any other section of New England. Thus, John Warner Barber (in his 1839 Historical Collections, page 448) says: "Soon after the English had settled on the island, attempts were made to convert the Indians to the faith of the Gospel, and, in course of years, all of them became *nominal* Christians."

Soon after 1680, all the old Sachems, who were alive when the English arrived had passed away, and their successors reigned in their stead.

As Thomas Macy says: "The Indians were instructed in the mode of fishing practised by the whites, and, in return, the whites were assisted by the Indians in pursuing the business."

(**Note**) Thomas Macy (1608–1682) was an early settler of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and of Nantucket Island. He came over to the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1635, becoming a founder of the town of Amesbury, Massachusetts. He served as Amesbury's first town clerk; he held many town offices, including those of school overseer and deputy to the Massachusetts General Court, and was involved in numerous land transactions. A Baptist, he left Amesbury in 1659 after years of conflict with local Puritan leaders, including being fined 30 shillings for providing shelter to Quakers during a rainstorm in 1657. He was among the first group of European settlers to establish his family on the island of Nantucket (then a part of the colony of New York); he, Tristram Coffin and other settlers purchased the land from the Native Americans. In 1671, Macy and Coffin were selected as spokesmen for the settlers, going to New York in 1671 to meet with Governor Francis Lovelace and secure their claim to Nantucket. Macy ultimately rose to the position of Chief Magistrate.

Another writer says: “There is no doubt that the Natick Indians hunted the whale in canoes, in a manner somewhat similar to that practised today by the Bow-Meaders of the north coast of Siberia.” Moreover, I have been personally informed by a gentleman of much culture and experience who knows as much about the Nantucket Whaling industry as any man now alive, that “hunting the whale was well-known and long practised by the Nantucket Indians.” If any further evidence is deemed necessary it may be found in the following quotation from Weymouth’s Voyage: “One especial thing in their manner of killing a whale which they (the Indians) call powdawe, and will describe his form, how he bloweth up the water, and that he is twelve fathoms long, and that they go in company with their King, with a multitude of their boats, and strike him with a bone made in the fashion of a harping iron, fastened to a rope, which they make great and strong of the bark of trees which they veer out after him; that all their boats come about him, and as he riseth above water, with their arrows they shoot him to death. When they have killed him and dragged him to shore, they call all their chief lords together, and sing a song of joy, and these chief lords, whom they call sagamores, divide the spoil and give to every man a share; which pieces so distributed they hang up about their houses for provision, and when they boil them they blow off the fat, and put in their pease, maize and other pulse which they eat.”

There can be no doubt that the Nantucket Indians joined gladly in the chase of whales, and that they were fully as dexterous as the whites, not only in securing, but in dealing with the carcasses afterwards. The year 1763–4 was, indeed, a sad one for the Indians of Nantucket, inasmuch as, from August in the former year to February in the latter, they suffered from a malignant form of epidemic which, even yet, has not been identified, although the probability is that it was either typhus or typhoid fever, small-pox or yellow fever. Curiously enough, of the English who visited them daily, caring for and nursing the afflicted natives, not one was affected by the pestilence, which ceased suddenly, without previous abatement, on the 16th of February, 1764. Before the epidemic broke out there were 358 Indians on the island, of whom 222 perished, leaving only 136 natives to represent the race. In 1791 there were but four male Indians and sixteen females left on the island, and in 1809 there were only three or four persons of pure blood and a few of mixed race. From 1664 to 1774 the records consist mainly of land-sales from the Indians to the English and of controversies about their respective claims to whales. Within this period also one repeatedly notices the names of the successors of the old sachems, for several generations; but, concurrently with these, up to 1754, are the records of many attempts on the part of some of the Indians to regain their lands.

(**Note on the 1763 epidemic**) There is no disputing that an epidemic of devastating lethality descended on Nantucket's Wampanoag population in the winter of 1763–64. Of 358 Wampanoags resident on Nantucket, 222 died in the course of a few winter months. Most of the victims were women, children, and old men. The main reason some fit young men were spared was because they were away from the island, out whaling "on the shoals to south'ard."

At most, one non-Wampanoag was infected, an Irish woman by the name of Molly Quinn, who kept an inn and ran a laundry on the southern edge of town. Molly Quinn later denied that she had ever been sick, although others insisted that she had indeed been sick and then recovered.

As the epidemic took hold, Nantucket's sheriff, who was also a physician, imposed a cordon sanitaire around the affected Wampanoag village at Miacomet in order to protect the residents of the rest of the island. Not only did this quarantine spare the English but also a number of Wampanoags employed as live-in servants in town and a small group of Wampanoags who lived apart from the others out in Madaket.

Although the disease did not spread to the English town (called Sherburne at the time), it did spread to Wampanoag communities on Martha's Vineyard and in Mashpee with fatalities in both places.

A great deal of attention has been paid to what this highly selective and deadly infection was. It was described as "yellow fever," but yellow fever is carried by mosquitoes, and this was a winter epidemic. Moreover, mosquitoes do not make ethnic discriminations about whom they bite. Nor was it smallpox, which was well-known, highly recognizable, and greatly feared. Whatever it was, it was only spread by direct contact with infected people or, apparently, with their clothing. It was carried to Mashpee by a Nantucket Wampanoag woman who traveled there before symptoms appeared, then sickened and died there.

Nantucket's historian of the 1700s, bilingual in English and Wampanoag and a practitioner of Wampanoag herbal medicine, was Zaccheus Macy (1713–97). Macy wrote down much of what we know about the epidemic. In 1797 and 1798, Friend Christopher Starbuck (1731–1815) wrote a series of letters to fellow Quaker Friend Moses Brown in Providence about the "Indian Sickness" of thirty-four years before. Using the late Zaccheus Macy's written account, Starbuck wrote about the numbers infected, the numbers recovered, the numbers deceased. And then…He blamed it on the Irish.

The story of the epidemic as he related it was that "a Brig from Ireland, having a number of passengers on board, was cast away near Long Hill on the North side of the island." Then, two women passengers died aboard, and their bodies were thrown overboard to be washed up onshore. What is more (and rather unlikely), from this same Irish vessel, clothing was sent ashore to none other than Irish Molly Quinn to

be washed in her laundry. Subsequently, Molly and one of her Wampanoag employees named Mary Norquata came down with “yellow fever” (that is to say that the infection caused its victims to turn yellow with jaundice). In the end, there were 222 deaths on Nantucket and more in Mashpee and on the Vineyard, but all English Nantucketers were spared.

The Irish were implicated by Christopher Starbuck on four counts: The Irish arrived on an infected vessel. The Irish threw dead bodies overboard. The Irish sent contaminated clothes ashore to be washed. And Irish Mollie Quinn, who handled the infected clothing, was the only non-Wampanoag to get sick.

The Nantucket Wampanoags didn’t come off entirely blameless either in Starbuck’s account. Somehow, they were constitutionally vulnerable to an illness to which the rugged English (and local Africans as well) were invulnerable.

This played into the belief, entrenched even in the 1700s, that Indians were doomed to extinction. And in this case, it was the Irish who came calling with the doom.

Christopher Starbuck’s original letters to Moses Brown are in the manuscript collection of the Nantucket Historical Association. Frances Karttunen has written about the Indian Sickness in The Other Islanders: People Who Pulled Nantucket’s Oars.

ſionary at the Vineyard, of each of whom I made the moſt ſcrupulous inquiry, you may depend on the truth of it.

About the beginning of Auguſt, 1763, when the ſickneſs began at Nantucket, the whole number of Indians belonging to that iſland was 358: of theſe, 258 had the diſtemper betwixt that time and the 20th of February following, 36 only of whom recovered: of the 100, who eſcaped the diſtemper, 34 were converſant with the ſick, eight dwelt ſeparate, 18 were at ſea, and 40 lived in Engliſh families. The phyſician informs me, that the blood and juices appeared to be highly putrid, and that the diſeaſe was attended with a violent inflammatory fever, which carried them off in about five days. The ſeaſon was uncommonly moiſt and cold, and the diſtemper began originally among them; but having once made its appearance ſeems to have been propagated by contagion; although ſome eſcaped it, who were expoſed to the infection.

The diſtemper made its appearance at Martha's Vineyard the beginning of December, 1763. It went through every family, into which it came, not one eſcaping it: fifty-two Indians had it, 39 of whom died; thoſe, who recovered, were chiefly of the younger ſort.

The appearance of the diſtemper was much the ſame in both theſe iſlands; it carried them off in each, in five or ſix days. What is ſtill more remarkable than even the great mortality of the diſtemper is, that not one Engliſh perſon had it in either of the iſlands, although the Engliſh greatly exceed in numbers; and that ſome perſons in one

Part of letter from Governor Andrew Oliver, Secretary of His Majesty's Province of Massachusetts Bay, to Israel Mauduit, a Fellow of the Royal Society, who was then in London as the Agent for the Colony, Dec 20, 1764.

In 1693 the island of Nantucket, ceded from the Provincial Government of New York, was incorporated in the State of Massachusetts. Names of Some of the Nantucket Indians Occurring in the Registry of Deeds, Petitions, Etc.

- Wanackmamack, Head Sachem of Nantucket in 1659.
- Wauwinet, aged Head Sachem of Northeastern section.
- Nicornoose, successor to Wauwinet.
- Autopscot (Attapechat or Attaychat), Sachem of Southwestern section.
- Potconet (or Pottacohannet), Sachem of Tuckernuck, etc.
- Nanahuma, probably a petty Sachem.
- Harry, a witness, son of Wapakowet.
- Wauwinnesit, or Amos, second son of Nicornoose.
- Saucoauso, alias Jeptha, son of Wanackmamack.
- Joshua Jethro, eldest son of Nicornoose.
- Wat Noose, bastard son of Nicornoose.
- Paul Noose, bastard son of Nicornoose.
- Masauquet, son of Autopscot.
- Harry Poritain, alias Beretan, son of Masauquet.
- Isaac Masauquet, son of Harry Poritain.
- 31Askommopoo, daughter of Nicornoose and wife of Spotso or Spoospotswa.
- Felix Kuttashamaquah, an interpreter.
- Cain, son of Saucoauso or Jeptha.
- Abel, son of Saucoauso or Jeptha.
- Ben Abel, son of Abel.
- Eben Abel, son of Abel.
- Jemima, daughter of Cain, and wife of James Shea.

•Pakapanessa, Indian associated with Nanahuma.

•Jonas Kimmo, Indian associated with Nanahuma.

•Tequamomany, sold lands to English in 1604.

•Mekowakim, sold lands to English in 1604.

•Peteson, a complainer, 1667.

•Larry Akkeramo, a complainer, 1667.

•Obadiah, a complainer, 1667.

•Wequakesuk, a sachem, 1673.

•Isaac Wauwinet, son of Nicornoose, successor of father.

•Heattohanen, another name for one of Nicornoose's sons.

•Wohwaninwot, another name for one of Nicornoose's sons.

•Cowpohanet, another name of Nanahuma.

•Spotso, son-in-law of Nicornoose, signed also as Spoospotswa.

•Sasapana Will, sold land to the English, 1687.

•Henry Britten, Sachem, 1701.

•Eastor, wife of Saucoauso, 1709.

•Joshiah or Josiah, son of Spotso.

•James Shay, Shea, or Shaa, husband of Jemima.

•Esau Cook, an Indian who sold land, 1742.

•Isaac Woosco, an Indian who sold land, 1745.

•Samuel Chegin, an Indian who sold land, 1747.

•Titus Zekey, an Indian who sold land, 1762.

•John Jethro, a descendant of Nicornoose.

•Abigail Jethro, a descendant of Joshua Jethro, son of Nicornoose.

•Jacob, son of Potconet, 1672.

•Ahkeiman, son of Potconet, 1676.

•Desire, or Desiah, a partner of Washaman, in whales, 1676.

•Waquaheso, related to Nicornoose.

•Wakeikman, Sessanuquis, Wienakisoo, three associated Indians, 1678.

•Nautakagin, a companion of Nanahuma, 1678.

•Quench, an Indian who divorced his wife, 1677.

•Mequash, an Indian with whaling rights, 1678.

•Machoogen, an Indian burglar, 1677.

•Debdekcoat, a fraudulent creditor, 1677.

•Shaakerune, an anti-prohibitionist, 1677.

•Seikinow, a complainer, 1699–1700.

•Titus Mamack, Joshua Mamack, John Mamack, descendants of Wanackmamack.

•Jouab, descendant of Wanackmamack.

•John Jouab, a disgruntled complainer.

•Jonathan, a disgruntled complainer.

•James Asab, a disgruntled complainer.

•John Tashime (Tashama), a descendant of Autopscot.

•John Jethro, a petitioner.

•Paul Jouab, a petitioner.

•Richard Napanah, a petitioner.

•Solomon Zachariah, a petitioner.

•Naubgrachas, a petitioner.

•Abel Nanahoo, a petitioner.

•John Asab, a petitioner.

•Barnabas Spotso, Sachem.

•James Papamoo, son of Barnabas Spotso.

•John Quass, the choice of Lakedon Indians for Sachem, when they repudiated Ben Abel, the legitimate chief.

•Sanchimaish, a witness to Isaac Wauwinett's will.

•Abram Tashama, son of John Tashama, 1741.

• Old Hannah, a witness.

•Ben Jouab, grandson of Pampason, 1752.

•Memfopooh, a messenger, 1752.

•Oowamassen, a witness to Isaac Wauwinnett's will, 1670.

•Joshua of Chappoquiddick, same as Joshua Jethro, eldest son of Nicornoose, 1706.

•Talagamomos, Keostahhan, Wumoanohquin, Quaquahchoonit, witnesses to Nicornoose's will, 1668.

•Ben Joab Pampushom, a claimant to Sachemdom of Occawa, 1745.

•Peter Tuphouse, witness to Pampushom's petition.

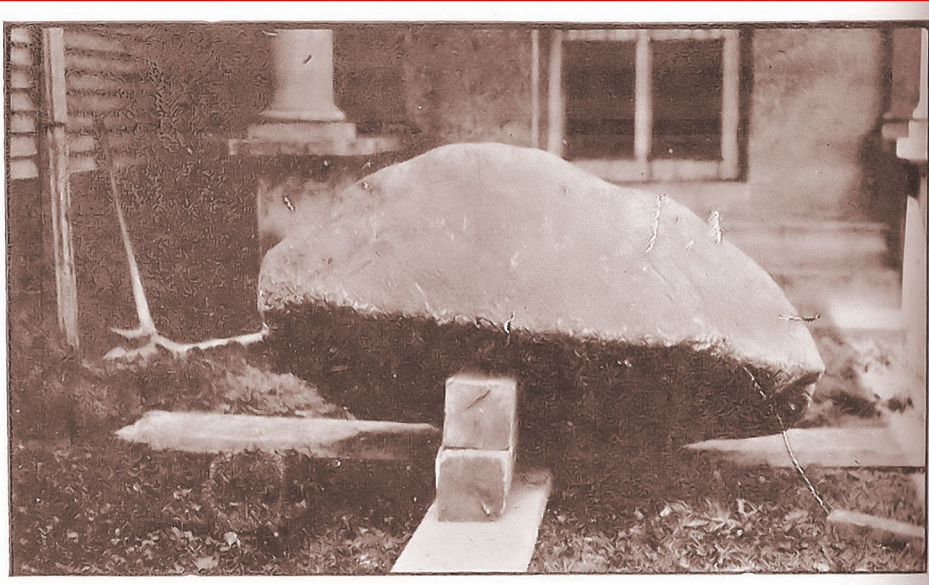
•Peleg Tuphouse, witness to Pampushom's petition.

•David Pompasson, said to have been a grandson of Nicornoose.

•Samuel Humbrey, a witness to John Jouab's petition, 1752.

Petty crimes and misdemeanors on the part of the Indians—too often caused by "fire-water"—frequently resulted in producing considerable trouble and annoyance to the proprietors, and when they found that the imposition of fines and the infliction of whipping in graver cases were inadequate to permanently restrain them, they at length appointed a superior Indian to undertake the office of superintendent and local magistrate, and with considerable success. The officer appointed was James Shouel, better known as Korduda and he soon became a terror to evil-doers, his usual procedure being, when one Indian complained of another, to order both the complainant and the defendant to be well whipped. This subsequently became known as "Korduda's law," and in many, if not in most cases, it was found very effective. He was also in the habit of having delinquents whipped for neglecting the cultivation of their corn, for drunkenness, etc.

A few other special Indians are referred to in Zaccheus Macy's well-known letter, "Old Aesop," the weaver, who was also a schoolmaster; "Old Saul," "a stern-looking old man;" Richard Nominash and his brother Sampson and little Jethro, who are described as "very substantial and very trusty men;" Zacchary Hoite, a minister who told his hearers "they must do as he said, but not as he did!" There were also some members of the old Hoight and Jafet families, and Benjamin Tashama, an Indian of strong individuality, to whom I shall now refer in detail.



TASHMA'S DOOR-STONE.

(**Note**) The large boulder at the entrance to the NHA Research Library is an artifact.In the mid-eighteenth century, Benjamin Tashama (d. 1770), the Wampanoag preacher and schoolmaster, placed the stone at the entrance to his house. It was in this house that he taught reading and writing to Wampanoag children prior to the 1763–64 epidemic that killed many people in Nantucket's Native community.

After losing his wife and students to the epidemic, Tashama remarried and lived the last years of his life in the island's New Guinea neighborhood. Captain Edward C. Joy (1806–1894) moved "Tashama's door stone" to his farm in Siasconset in the mid-1800s, and then to his house on Liberty Street. His daughter, Mary G. Joy (1834–1917), gave the stone to the Nantucket Historical Association in 1906. It was placed outside the Fair Street Museum in 1917. The door stone being installed at the Fair Street Museum, July 24, 1917

A portion of the industrious life of Tashima, says the author of "Miriam Coffin," "had been devoted to study; and he had succeeded, with infinite labour, in adapting his literary acquirements to the language and capacity of his tribe. He had nourished the vain hope of preserving the nation without a cross in its blood, and the language of his people in its pristine purity. It was a magnificent conception! The design was worthy of the last, as he was the greatest, chief of his tribe. He was the last, because none succeeded him; he was the greatest, for he was the most benevolent." While few details of his life are known it is attested that he latterly lived on the eastern boundary of Gibbs' swamp, about forty rods northeast of the fifth milestone on the 'Sconset road. Here, some years ago, the cellar of his dwelling still remained, and the large stone which formed the entrance may now be seen in the rooms of the Nantucket Historical Association. Here Tashama, often called "the last Sachem of Nantucket," dwelt with his son Isaac and his daughter Sarah. Benjamin Tashama died in 1770. His brother, John Tashama, was alive in 1754, when he signed a petition to the court. John had one son, Abram, mentioned by John Coffin and Abishai Folger in a report dated May 25th, 1743. Sarah Tashama married Isaac Earop, and on April 27th, 1776, a daughter was born to them. She was named Dorcas Honorable. When this child grew up she became a domestic in the family of Mr. John Cartwright, where she lived for many years, and she died in 1822.

For these facts I am indebted to a statement made by Mr. Franklin Folger in May, 1743. Vide "Inquirer and Mirror", October 29, 1910.

She was a full-blooded Indian, and the very last of her race on Nantucket; and thus, little more than two centuries from the discovery of the island, passed away the only remaining one of the aboriginal people who had dominated it from time immemorial.

Abram Api Quady or Quary, a half-breed, who lived in a hut at Shimmo for many years, died in 1855 at the age of 83, respected by all who knew him. He was the son of the notorious Quibby, already referred to, and of Judith Quary—a half-breed fortune-teller well-known on the island at one time. Abram, for obvious reasons, chose to assume his mother's name. A fine portrait in oil of this dignified old man may be seen in the Nantucket Atheneum.

It may seem strange that no burial place of the Indians has been discovered on the island of Nantucket, so far as I am aware. Skeletal remains and a few bones have been discovered at one time and another, and in various places, but I believe no regular place of Indian burial has ever been found. This may be thus accounted for, viz:

Island Indians usually buried their dead contiguous to the coast-line, and the progressive erosion of the coast during two centuries may have possibly washed such remains into the ocean. This is merely a suggestion, and as I have but few proofs to offer, I am subject to correction. It is probable, however, that the Indians buried their dead in the neighborhood of Shawkemo, Pocomo, Folger's Hill on the Polpis road, at Quaise, beyond the present water-works, and at or near Miacomet. It is recorded that there was a circular burying-ground for one of the tribes near the head-waters of Lake Miacomet, and that Benjamin Tashama was buried there.

An opinion too generally shared, which regards the American Indian race as consisting of mere savages, almost inhuman in their ferocity and cruelty, and without a redeeming feature of any kind, is as untrue as it is unjust. They naturally possessed

those characteristics shared by all unenlightened races of men who have been deprived of the elevating influences of civilization and a high code of ethics, but a careful study of their lives and history shows that, according to their enlightenment, they were actuated by many virtues which, in superior races, count for dignified manhood and nobility of mind.

In personal bravery and courage they had few equals and yet they accepted conquest or punishment with a sublime fortitude and stoicism which scorned to ask for either life or pardon. Equality, freedom, and independence constituted the very atmosphere of their being and, in their dealings with their own race, the rights of each individual, and his personal freedom, were universally acknowledged.

Judged from our modern standard the principles of morality which governed their lives, if of a lower order, were yet in keeping with their instincts and their environment, and they believed that "the crimes of the vicious were punished by the disgrace, contempt and danger they ensured for transgressors."

When all that can be said against the Indians has been spoken it must be conceded that they embodied a pure and lofty patriotism, for which they fought and died like men and true patriots, and although they had to gradually yield up their possessions and their homes in the land they loved, and to recede and disappear before the advancing wave of civilization, yet, as De Forest says: "We may drop a tear over the grave of the race which has perished, and regret that civilization and Christianity have ever accomplished so little for its amelioration."

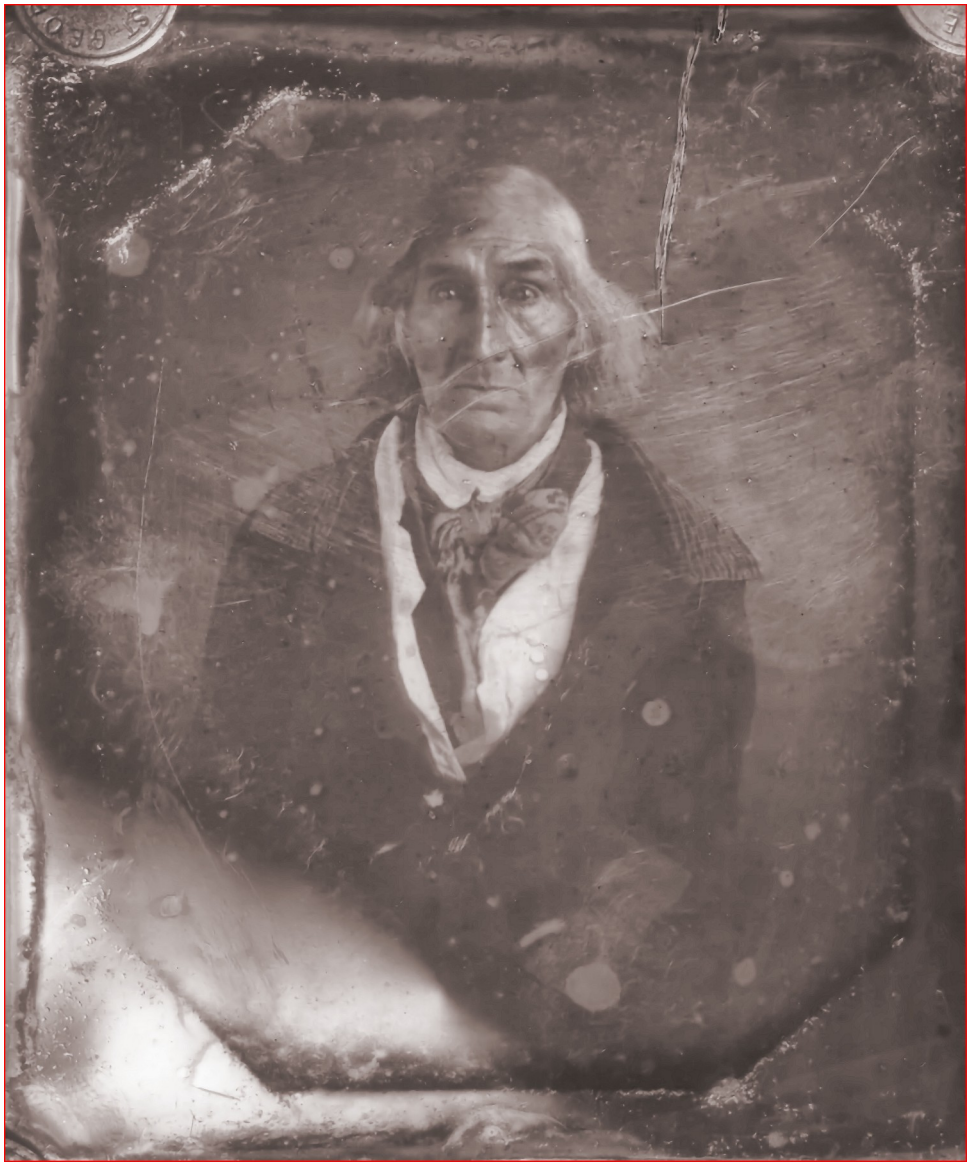
In the somewhat severe words of Obed Macy, "Their only misfortune was their connection with Christians, and their only crime the imitation of their manners."

In conclusion, I venture to make two suggestions, one a minor and the other a major one. Would it not be expedient and appropriate on the part of the Nantucketers to erect a tablet over the grave of "Dorcas," the last of the aborigines? The residents of "the little purple island," I think, owe so much to the memories associated with her vanished race.

Or, now that Nantucket is becoming, increasingly, year by year, a fashionable ocean-bound sea-resort, would it not be possible to carry out the suggestion made by an off-islander, as far back as 1881 at the Commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the death of Tristram Coffin, to erect by public subscription "a towering statue in dusky bronze, representing the venerable Indian Sachem, Wanackmamack, the tried and true friend of the original purchasers of the island?"

The island certainly owes this illustrious Chief a debt of gratitude, for it was almost entirely due to his benign influences that the "silent people of the forest" and the strangers lived in peace and amity together, and thus expedited the dawn of civilization without an obstacle within its boundaries. I have spoken, and I leave these suggestions to the islanders for reflection, with every fond wish for their prosperity and success.

END – The Last Indians Of Nantucket Island



Abram Quary

the last known Indian male on Nantucket

who died in 1854

Dorcas Honorable

the last known Native American woman on Nantucket

who died in 1855.

About the Author

Larry W Jones is a songwriter, having penned over 7,700 song lyrics. Published in 22 volumes of island themed, country, cowboy, western and bluegrass songs. The entire assemblage is the world's largest collection of lyrics written by an individual songwriter.

As a wrangler on the "Great American Horse Drive", at age 68, he assisted in driving 800 half-wild horses 62 miles in two days, from Winter pasture grounds in far NW Colorado to the Big Gulch Ranch outside of Craig Colorado.

His book, "The Oldest Greenhorn", chronicles the adventures and perils in earning the "Gate-to-Gate" trophy belt buckle the hard way.

Other books published by Larry W Jones:

1. A Squirrel Named Julie and The Fox Ridge Fox
2. The Painting Of A Dream
3. The Boy With Green Thumbs and The Wild Tree Man
4. Red Cloud – Chief Of the Sioux
5. Spotted Tail – The Orphan Negotiator
6. Little Crow – The Fur Trapper's Patron
7. Chief Gall – The Strategist
8. Crazy Horse – The Vision Quest Warrior
9. Sitting Bull - The Powder River Power
10. Rain-In-The-Face – The Setting Sun Brave
11. Two Strike – The Lakota Club Fighter
12. Chief American Horse – The Oglala Councilor
13. Chief Dull Knife – The Sharp-Witted Cheyenne
14. Chief Joseph – Retreat From Grande Ronde
15. The Oregon Trail Orphans
16. Kids In Bloom Volume 1
17. Kids In Bloom Volume 2
18. Kids Animal Pals Volume 1
19. Kids Animal Pals Volume 2
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58. Clipper Ships – Wool and Wealth
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60. Clipper Ships – The Kiwi Connection
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119. Day Of the Double Sun - The Manhattan Project
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123. Cofachiqui - Paramount Princess
124. Chief Powhatan - Tidewater Titan
125. Chief Shabbona – Bear Of Kankanee
126. Geronimo - The Nomad Apache
127. The Command Of Cochise
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